



Public Announcement

2014 Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge

Feral Horse Gathers

Sheldon-Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Lakeview, Oregon
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Beginning August 4, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will gather approximately 420 feral horses within the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge as part of its ongoing management actions to protect native wildlife and habitat on the refuge. Members of the public or media wishing to observe feral horse gathers or animals at Service corral facilities must RSVP to Megan Nagel (megan_nagel@fws.gov, 503-231-6123) by July 25, 2014.

Currently gather operations are scheduled to take place from August 4- 15. Additional gathers will occur as needed during 2014 to meet our management objective for removal. Observation opportunities will also be provided at Service corral facilities following gathers. Updated information will be posted on our website www.fws.gov/sheldonhartmntn/Sheldon/horseburro.html.

At over 575,000 acres, Sheldon NWR is the largest intact tract of the Great Basin ecosystem left in the American West. It was established to protect native wildlife, especially the American pronghorn, and protects a number of rare and imperiled species, including the Greater sage-grouse. The once-domestic feral horses and burros cause significant damage to this fragile landscape. If they are not removed from Sheldon NWR, the Service will be unable to restore and conserve habitat conditions for native fish, wildlife, and plants, the purposes for which the refuge was established.

When removing feral horses and burros, the Service is committed to humane treatment of all animals. Animals will be gathered and transported to selected adoption contractors, consistent with the guidelines for humane treatment and safety outlined in the Sheldon NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

In order to conduct effective and efficient operations, to improve safety for horses and burros, and to ensure public safety, the administrative facility where horses and burros are held temporarily is closed to public entry. In addition, portions of Sheldon NWR surrounding gather operations, including some roads, will be occasionally closed to public entry while gather operations are underway.

The Service will provide limited escorted opportunities for the public and media representatives to observe gather operations. Primary considerations for selection of observation sites are safety and to ensure efficient and effective gather operations. The exact location of the gather sites will depend on site-specific conditions that may vary from day to day. The observation locations will be selected to provide an opportunity to view the gather without disrupting gather operations or

creating a safety hazard. Consequently, members of the public/media should not expect opportunities for up-close observation or observation of all gather operations and should be prepared to travel to different locations within the broader gather area.

Members of the public/ media will not be allowed into closed areas of Sheldon NWR without prior reservation and escort.

Travel to gather observation sites will require driving gravel roads and potentially dirt roads suitable only for high clearance four-wheel drive vehicles. The Service will not provide transportation to the gather observation sites.

Weather during the gather may be variable with temperatures ranging from approximately 30-90 degrees Fahrenheit with rain showers or thunderstorms possible. Facilities will not be available and observers should plan accordingly, including adequate food and water. Observers should be prepared to hike through steep, rocky and uneven terrain for distances up to one-half mile and to remain at the observation site for a minimum of four hours.

For additional public observation information and updates regarding area closures, gather dates, observation schedules, and horse and burro adoption visit:
www.fws.gov/sheldonthartmtn/Sheldon/horseburro.html.